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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
31 January 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in South Vietnam No. 4  
(As of 7:00 AM EST)

1. Communist forces continued their unprecedented wave of bold attacks against South Vietnamese cities and key allied civil and military installations for the second consecutive day on 31 January. The enemy activity was focused primarily on the Saigon area and the delta provinces to the south of the capital. Allied mopping-up operations continued throughout South Vietnam's I and II Corps areas, amid sporadic new forays by the Communists in some sectors of this region, the center of the 30 January attacks. President Thieu has declared a state of martial law throughout the country.

2. Although the action has thus far been characterized by a brazen enemy disregard for his own casualties, allied personnel losses have been relatively light. Enemy casualties are currently tenuously estimated at around 1,400.

3. It is clear that the Communists made careful preparations for this spectacular phase of their "winter-spring" campaign. The countrywide pattern of mortar attacks, in many cases followed by ground assaults against the provincial capitals and major district towns, in addition to large-scale attacks on key allied military installations and positions, required a great deal of planning and coordination. It is also evident that North Vietnamese main force units were heavily engaged in many of the assaults, and worked closely with local Viet Cong units. A number of recently captured documents have indicated

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that the Communists were planning an effort to spark at least a degree of "general uprising" among the populace in the urban areas. It is probable that they hoped the present wave of attacks would spur some general civil unrest and support by the urban people. There is little evidence as yet that it did, however.

#### The Saigon Area

4. Allied military forces in the capital have restored a semblance of order to the city following a night of enemy attacks against targets including the US Embassy, the Presidential Palace, and the large airfield and military complex at Tan Son Nhut as well as numerous other allied installations both in and near the city.

5. US troops drove a band of attackers from the US Embassy compound by 9:00 AM (Saigon time) on 31 January. The building itself was rocked by several large explosions, but no structural damage was reported. The embassy is now fully operational. Most of the fighting occurred in the compound surrounding the embassy. Although the attackers were able to fire into it, they apparently did not physically penetrate the building. At least six allied personnel were killed in the assault, and five wounded. Enemy casualties were at least 19 killed.

6. A group of 20 Viet Cong, dressed in civilian clothes, attempted to attack the residence of President Thieu, but were driven away by an alert guard force with no injury to the president or his family.

7. The government radio station in Saigon continues off the air due to enemy action; however, the military radio has been broadcasting to the Saigon population.

8. At last report, fighting was continuing at the Tan Son Nhut airfield with some 100 Viet Cong still holding out within the field's perimeter. The Communists reportedly overran the western section of the base, which included a control tower in the area. Several other areas of the base, including airmen's

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barracks and one runway, were apparently also under attack by mortar, rocket, or small arms fire.

9. Just to the northeast of the capital city, the US bases at Bien Hoa and Long Binh were hit by Viet Cong mortar and ground attacks. At Bien Hoa, two US jet aircraft were destroyed and 10 aircraft damaged.

#### The Delta Provinces

10. Eight of the 16 province capitals of South Vietnam's IV Corps came under Viet Cong mortar attack on 30-31 January. Numerous other district towns and villages were also attacked. One of the enemy's prime targets was the IV Corps Headquarters at Can Tho which was hit by a mortar and ground attack. Some 75 enemy casualties have been counted. At last report, however, Vietnamese soldiers and police were still attempting to drive the attackers out of Can Tho city.

#### I Corps

11. New attacks occurred this morning on the northern cities of Quang Tri, Hue, Tam Ky, Quang Ngai and the US base at Chu Lai. Each city was struck by a mortar attack and a ground assault. At the Chu Lai installation, three US jet aircraft were destroyed and five others damaged by an extensive mortar and rocket barrage.

12. Renewed mortar and rocket attacks were reported at Da Nang on 31 January. Seventeen US helicopters were damaged at the Marble Mountain air facility.

13. At last report, South Korean Marines were still heavily engaged with dug-in enemy troops in the city of Hoi An, south of Da Nang. Initial reports show 52 Communists killed thus far in the sharp fighting there.

#### II Corps

14. Two battalions of enemy troops continue to control Kontum city. Reports yesterday that the city had been cleared were apparently incorrect. The MACV compound is said to be still under attack but holding

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out against the enemy. About 150 Communists have been reportedly involved in the fighting. Allied reinforcements from the US 4th Infantry Division are presently en route to Kontum.

15. The situation in the coastal city of Phan Thiet remains unclear. Large numbers of enemy troops are apparently in control of strategic positions within the city. The two battalions of the North Vietnamese 18B Regiment which hit Nha Trang have now been driven from the city leaving some 70 dead behind. The enemy force destroyed the sector headquarters and had captured the province headquarters and radio station.

16. Sporadic fighting also continues in Qui Nhon with the radio station and railroad depot still in enemy hands. Light fighting was also reported outside Tuy Hoa, but the situation there appears to be under control.

17. Ten three-man North Vietnamese underwater demolition teams were reported to be operating in the Cam Ranh Bay area. At least one of these men has been captured. The prisoner claimed he participated in the attack on a Norwegian tanker early on 31 January, during which the vessel was damaged by an explosion.

#### DMZ Area

18. The area immediately south of the Demilitarized Zone remains relatively quiet with US Marine patrols reporting light, sporadic contact with small enemy units. Evidence of the intense enemy buildup throughout the area continues, however.

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20. A successful US strike against the new North Vietnamese command group in Laos could significantly affect the development of enemy operations in the Khe Sanh area. The new headquarters is suspected to be a "front" or corps level command group responsible for the North Vietnamese 304th and 325th Divisions which are both now in the immediate Khe Sanh area.

21. A US Marine patrol observed four to five surface-to-air (SAM) missile launching sites in the Demilitarized Zone approximately six miles northwest of Con Thien on 29 January. The positions were apparently close to a state of operational readiness as air strikes directed at them resulted in nine secondary explosions.

#### Other Related Developments

22. Communist radio in both South and North Vietnam is continuing to play up the current enemy offensive. According to the enemy broadcasts, extensive damage was inflicted on the allies in the Saigon area. During upcoming days, the Communists can be expected to tout their raids as a great victory both among their own forces and to the people at large in South Vietnam, in the hope of bolstering rank and file morale and intimidating the uncommitted populace.

23. Communist commentators abroad are utilizing the enemy assaults as a basis for claims that they "give the lie" to US assertions that the allies are on the way to victory in Vietnam. According to a Moscow commentator in a 31 January account, the strength of the enemy attacks demonstrates the futility of the continued allied effort to "settle the Vietnam problem through war." The implication of his remarks is that the US should moderate its policy in a manner sufficient to bring about a political solution to the conflict.

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